

REMARKS

Claims 16-27 remain in this application. Claims 1-15 are canceled. Reconsideration of the application is requested.

Independent claim 16 is rejected, along with certain dependent claims, as anticipated by U.S. Patent 3,977,449 to Sadashige, claims 21-23 and 25 are rejected as unpatentable over the Sadashige patent in view of U.S. Patent 6,439,731 to Johnson et al., and claim 24 is rejected as unpatentable over the Sadashige and Johnson et al. patents in view of U.S. Patent 6,156,411 to Jennings. Reconsideration of these rejections is requested.

A wood-based decorative article as specified in claim 16 includes a veneer formed by slicing wood and having a transparent property, and a substrate formed of a transparent synthetic resin and joined to a rear surface of the veneer. Since the veneer has a transparent property and the substrate formed of the transparent synthetic resin is arranged on the rear surface side of the veneer, light is allowed to pass through not only the veneer but also the substrate on the rear surface side of the veneer. Consequently, in contrast to a conventional wood-based decorative article, the present wood-based decorative article can have a unique and beautiful finish, enhancing the feel of depth and the feel of gloss of the veneer (page 13, lines 19-31). This is discussed, for example, in lines 19-31 on page 13 of the specification.

The Sadashige patent, by contrast, relates to a process for producing wood veneer, and particularly to a process for producing sheets of wide veneer to be applied to plywood and sheets of wide and thin veneer for producing fancy board products. The portion of the Sadashige specification referred to by the Examiner and appearing in lines 31-50 of column 8 teach:

(a) a sliced veneer is overlaid and glued onto a substrate or glued together to make plywood by means of adhesive;

(b) Wood, plywood, particle board, hard board, paper, plastic sheet, cement board, ceramic board, metallic board and so on are usable as a substrate; and

(c) an adhesive such as that described in column 7, or a usual adhesive as employed in the field of plywood or fancy board products, may be employed.

The Sadashige reference discloses a plywood having a veneer formed by slicing wood, and a substrate formed of a plastic sheet and joined to a rear surface of the veneer. However, the Sadashige reference does not teach that the veneer has a transparent property. Further, the Sadashige reference merely suggests "plastic sheet" as one of various materials usable for the substrate, and does not teach that the plastic sheet is transparent. Thus, the Sadashige reference fails to teach or suggest that the substrate joined to the rear surface of the veneer is transparent.

The Examiner's comments on claims 17 and 18 on page 3 of the Office Action are noted. However, neither the transparent reinforcing member in claim 17 nor the impregnated veneer or reinforcing member in claim 18 is found in the portion of the description or in the drawing figures referred to by the Examiner.

As mentioned above, the Sadashige reference fails to teach or suggest a veneer "having a transparent property" or "a substrate formed of a transparent synthetic resin and joined to a rear surface of said veneer" as recited in claim 16. Furthermore, the Sadashige reference fails to teach or suggest "a transparent reinforcing member... interposed between said veneer and said substrate" as recited in claim 17 or "at least one of said veneer and said reinforcing member... impregnated with a transparent synthetic resin" as recited in claim 18. These limitations are also neither found in nor suggested by either of the other references relied on by the Examiner, and each of claims 16-18 is patentable. The rest of the claims in this application depend on claim 16 and are patentable as well.

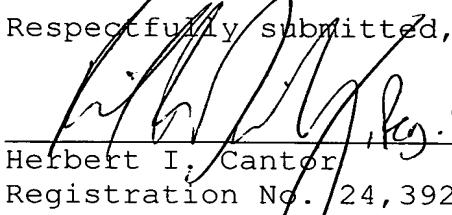
The discussion of U.S. Patent 5,989,657 to Wuertz appearing on page 5 of the Office Action is unclear, since it appears the Wuertz patent is no longer relied on in the rejection of any claim.

This application is now in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner have any questions after considering this

Reply, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned attorney.

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Respectfully submitted,


for Herbert I. Cantor
Registration No. 24,392

CROWELL & MORING LLP
P.O. Box 14300
Washington, D.C. 20044-4300
Telephone No.: (202) 624-2500
Facsimile No.: (202) 628-8844
HIC:RRD:msy